United Nations S/PV.4898 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-ninth year

Provisional

4898th meeting

Tuesday, 20 January 2004, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Alvear Valenzuela/Mr. Muñoz	(Chile)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Benmehidi
	Angola	Mrs. Bento
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Cardoso
	China	Ms. Jiang Ning
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Germany	Mr. Thuemmel
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nikiforov
	Spain	Ms. Menéndez
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Lake
	United States of America	Mr. Olson

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

04-21364 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.40 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Kenya, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda.

In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

If there is no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the representative of Kenya to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

I wish to remind all speakers of what I indicated at the morning session, in other words, that they limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. In addition, I will not be individually inviting speakers to take seats at the table, and inviting them to resume their seats on the side. When a speaker is taking the floor, the conference officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table. I thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list under rule 37 is the representative of Israel. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Mekel (Israel): Madam President, at the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency for the month of January and to express our satisfaction with your efforts in initializing this debate. We would also like to extend our congratulations to your predecessor and to the newly elected members of the Council.

In spite of numerous developments, aptly detailed in the report of the Secretary General (S/2003/1053) on children and armed conflict, the general situation for children remains grave and unacceptable. Placing children on the front lines as active participants in violence, as aggressors or as victims, has dire short-term and long-term consequences for children, for the societies they live in and for the hopes and dreams of a stable peace.

The latest report of the Secretary-General contains shocking information about the abuse and harm to which children continue to be subjected. We cannot allow ourselves to be desensitized to it. Unfortunately, many of the gains described in the report relate to developments on paper rather than in the field. In this regard, the deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions and the practice of naming parties to armed conflict that are recruiting or using children, if properly implemented, seem to us to be of particular importance because of their potential for bringing about positive change on the ground.

In word and in deed, Israel has supported international initiatives aimed at protecting children from the devastation of armed conflict, including the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocols, to which we became a signatory two years ago. Israel's accession to the Convention was followed by our adoption of "Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty", a law that ensures that the rights of the child are guaranteed constitutional protection. The adoption of the Basic Law sparked a flurry of judicial and legislative activity that broadened the commitment of Israeli society to the principles of the Convention.

It goes without saying that the formal practice of forced conscription of children is abhorrent and must be outlawed. But the participation of children in armed conflict is not limited to formal military service. Children have also been recruited for roving militias, armed gangs and terrorist groups. In our region, children have been recruited and exploited by terrorist organizations as human shields, for the placing of explosives, as gunmen and even as suicide bombers. It is regrettable that the Secretary-General's report fails again to make specific mention of this reprehensible tactic in our region. We regret also that the report does not address in more direct terms the plight of Israeli children suffering from a relentless terrorist campaign.

Both Israeli and Palestinian children continue to be the greatest victims of the terrorism that plagues our region. Over the last two years, Palestinian children have been increasingly used as human shields and have been mobilized for terrorist attacks, while the average age of suicide bombers has dropped significantly. For

an ever-increasing number of Israeli children as well, growing up is becoming a painful experience.

Indeed, Israeli children are often the intended and preferred victims of terrorists. Palestinian terrorist groups, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade have directed many terrorist attacks specifically against children, including attacks on school buses, discotheques, pizza parlours and other locations where large numbers of children are known to gather.

In the conflict that plagues our region, as in any conflict, no one has a monopoly on the status of victim. The suffering of Israeli and Palestinian children must be acknowledged. If we deny the suffering and victimhood of the other side, we undermine the prospects of mutual understanding and tolerance that are the foundations of any lasting peace.

Recently in the General Assembly, unfortunately, there was an attempt to do just that. The General Assembly adopted for the second year in a row a resolution pertaining specifically to the situation facing Palestinian children. While Israel shares this concern for the plight of Palestinian children, we continue to believe that the issue of children should not be politicized and the situation of any group of children should not be singled out in this way, let alone distorted. Once this resolution was adopted and in order to rectify this imbalance, Israel reluctantly introduced a mirror resolution to draw attention to the suffering of Israeli children from terrorism. Unfortunately, a group of delegations, determined not to acknowledge that Israeli children were also victims in this conflict, sought to distort this resolution beyond recognition. As a result, Israel was compelled to withdraw its text. In doing so, we expressed the hope that Member States would see this unfortunate incident as a wakeup call to end the politicization and double standards in United Nations debates on issues of universal concern, such as the plight of children. We continue to hold to that hope today.

In conclusion, Israel welcomes the discussion of specific issues concerning the protection of children in armed conflict and the opportunity to express our firm support for the continuation of the monitoring process to that effect. We yearn for the day when peace is the prevailing global condition and there is no longer any need to deal with the specific impact of armed conflict on children. But, until that day, the international community must continue to act with resolve in extending protection to those who are most vulnerable and confronting with courage the factors that continue to feed this ugly phenomenon.

Madam President, in concurrence with your desire, I have read only a shortened version of our statement, and a full version is being distributed.

The President: I thank the representative of Israel for his statement and for having adhered to the time allotted for statements. I now call on the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Madam President, may I begin by complimenting your skilful stewardship of the Council's deliberations today and Chile's leadership during the current month. We also express our deep appreciation to Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their comprehensive briefings.

During the past decade and a half, the international community has taken some significant measures to alleviate the sad plight of millions of children in armed conflict. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has provided a tool at the national and international levels for the protection and development of children worldwide. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict has strengthened these universal norms. At the special session of the General Assembly in 2002, world leaders reiterated their determination to ensure a world fit for children. The Security Council in its successive resolutions has further consolidated international standards for the protection of children in conflict and post-conflict societies.

These achievements took considerable efforts on the part of all concerned, including the United Nations and its agencies, the Member States, international civil society and parties to conflicts. The dedication of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, in raising awareness of the protection regime deserves special mention. Bangladesh has consistently advocated bringing the Special Representative's Office under the United Nations regular budget.

As we deliberate today, some 300,000 children are still being used as child soldiers around the world. Millions remain physically disabled. Many have been gravely psychologically traumatized. Twenty million

children have been uprooted from their homes due to wars. Entire generations of children are growing up permanently scarred by the brutalities of conflict. The most vulnerable are the girl children. They fall victim to sexual abuse, other violence and the deadly HIV/AIDS. Haunted by horrific memories of atrocities, the children often find little scope for healing as they witness the perpetrators getting away with impunity. The vicious cycle of their sufferings continues into the post-conflict stage as they inexorably descend into poverty, illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, trafficking or foreign occupation.

Far more, as all will agree, needs to be done urgently to protect every child victim of conflict. The era of application in international child-protection standards must replace the era of rhetoric. The Council must ensure that parties involved in a conflict respect global standards of protection of children in conflict. The specific needs and vulnerability of children, particularly of the girl child, must be integrated into peace processes and post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, recovery and reconstruction.

We strongly support the incorporation of child protection advisers and related provisions into the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The practice of zero tolerance for violations of codes of conduct by United Nations peacekeepers and associated personnel must continue. Children in post-conflict societies must be ensured access to trauma counselling, education and health services. The illicit flow of small arms into conflict areas must be curbed. The culture of impunity for violators of children must also be brought to an end.

Bangladesh has always kept the question of the protection and development of children high on its national and international agendas. We were among the first countries to have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as its two Optional Protocols. The protection and promotion of children's rights, particularity those of the girl child, and allocations of the highest budgets for their education and health have been the priority policy thrust of our Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. We have adopted a national plan of action for children. The decade 2001 to 2010 is being observed in Bangladesh as the Decade of the Rights of the Child.

Our civil societies and private sectors work shoulder to shoulder with the Government to promote the best interests of children. Our peacekeepers receive special training on child protection as they carry the message of peace to conflict-ridden societies across continents. As Ms. Carol Bellamy stated, a leading Bangladeshi non-governmental organization, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, is contributing significantly to the rehabilitation of child soldiers and girl children through involvement in non-formal education in Afghanistan. Ironically, Bangladesh, a developing nation itself, has done more than its share in spreading stability and values to conflict-ridden parts of the world, including Africa. We believe that societal change must come from within or from positive examples derived from comparable milieus. Efforts to impose alien values will risk evoking the same sentiments as those of the Trojan priest Laocoon, who feared the Greeks even though they came bearing gifts.

We must prevent today's victim from becoming tomorrow's perpetrator by inculcating a culture of peace and non-violence in the mind of every child. Bangladesh calls upon the Council and the United Nations system to lend support for the observance of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World through concrete programmes on peace education and conflict prevention. Robust pursuit of these goals will most certainly alter the future of the child for the better. It will also help usher in a new dawn of hope for humanity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Bangladesh for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

I now call on the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): The European Union (EU), Madame, warmly welcomes your decision to mark the high importance of today's debate by presiding over our deliberations.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process; potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia

and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association country, Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

I thank you, Madame, for providing us with an opportunity to debate this important issue and I also wish to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for their briefings.

The European Union strongly endorses the continued commitment demonstrated by the Security Council in giving high priority to the protection of children in its regular dialogue on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Regrettably, young boys and girls continue to be pulled into outright combat and exploitation by armed forces and groups. We welcome in particular the adoption of resolution 1460 (2003) on 30 January 2003.

The European Union also wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict of 10 November 2003 and agrees that

> "the annual review and debate by the Security Council on this issue should be mainly devoted to a comprehensive review of the state of compliance on the ground" (*S/2003/1053, para. 83*).

The recommendations contained at the end of the report warrant careful consideration, in particular when it comes to non-compliance. Targeted measures should be taken by the Council where insufficient progress has been made by parties in accordance with resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), as proposed in the Secretary-General's report. All relevant parts of the United Nations system must shoulder their respective responsibilities in a coordinated manner, both for systematic monitoring and reporting of violations and compliance, and for preventative and rehabilitating actions for these child victims of armed conflict.

We reiterate again that the recruitment and use of girls and boys in armed conflict is an atrocity that must end, violating as it does international humanitarian law as well as human rights law. The EU strongly urges the States and other parties to armed conflict listed in annexes I and II of the Secretary-General's report to immediately stop the recruitment and/or use of girls and boys in situations of armed conflict. In this context, we urge States to accelerate the process of ratification or accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which includes, as a war crime, conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 or using them to participate actively in hostilities in both international and non-international armed conflicts. As such, we fully subscribe to the views and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report with respect to the role of the International Criminal Court in this arena and endorse the statement that concrete steps should be taken to ensure the early prosecution of persons responsible for war crimes against children.

In the last decade, more than 2 million children have been killed in armed conflict and more than 6 million have suffered physical mutilation. Reliable estimates suggest that some 300,000 child soldiers are currently engaged in war operations. Millions of children have become orphans or have been left homeless as a result of war. The cruel irony that, in armed conflict, it is the innocent who are often the first casualties remains intact.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols set out clear legal standards pertaining to the protection of children. The European Union urges those States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention as a matter of priority and to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Allow me to reflect briefly on some recent initiatives undertaken within the European Union. First, the General Affairs Council of the European Union approved, on 8 December 2003, the European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. These Guidelines, the culmination of many months of deliberation, were drafted in collaboration with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and with UNICEF and a group of relevant non-governmental organization experts. The implementation of these Guidelines and their immediate, effective and sustained mainstreaming throughout all relevant European Union policies and actions is a priority of the European Union.

The European Union will address the short-, medium- and long-term impact of armed conflict on children in an effective and comprehensive manner,

making use of the variety of tools at its disposal and building on past and ongoing activities.

These objectives will be pursued through a number of specific initiatives, including, importantly, the monitoring of and reporting on conflict area situations and the continuation and development of technical cooperation programmes for the disarmament, rehabilitation and reinsertion into civilian life of children.

These newly adopted Guidelines were also discussed in Rome on 10 and 11 December 2003 in the presence of governmental and non-governmental organization representatives from 27 European countries on the occasion of the European Union Forum on Human Rights, organized by the Italian Presidency of the European Union and the European Commission. The Forum elaborated a number of proposals aimed at preventing the trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors and their involvement in armed conflict. The European Union has already indicated that it will attach priority to children and armed conflict under the European Union's human rights agenda in the next six months.

Secondly, I would like to mention the European Union Council conclusions on cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations on crisis management, specifically on the protection of civilians in European Union-led crisis management operations, which call for mainstreaming a strong child protection perspective in European Union-led crisis management operations.

The European Union also applauds the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Council to integrate child protection advisers into United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations. The European Parliament has also played a prominent role in the protection of children affected by conflict. At its most recent meeting in October 2003, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution on the rights of children and child soldiers in particular.

The European Union continues actively to support and work closely with the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other actors, including non-governmental organizations, aimed at relieving, to the greatest extent possible, the suffering of children in situations of armed conflict and ensuring that those responsible for horrific crimes are held accountable. We look forward to receiving and giving due consideration to the Secretary-General's comprehensive assessment of the scope and effectiveness of the United Nations system's response, including recommendations for strengthening, mainstreaming, integrating and sustaining activities in relation to children affected by armed conflict.

Addressing the issue of children victimized in armed conflict must increasingly take place collectively at national, regional and international levels. Momentum generated must not be lost. The Security Council will shortly begin deliberations on a new draft resolution. It is our hope that a new draft resolution — among other things — will result in a continuation of the list of all parties to armed conflict that recruit or use soldiers in violation of international obligations in all situations. Guidance from the Council on how to strengthen further monitoring and evaluation of the situation of children in armed conflict would also be useful. We hope that many of the concerns articulated today will resonate in these ongoing deliberations and will find voice in the draft resolution to follow.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Sierra Leone, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): We are grateful for your decision, Madam, to be present here today to lead our discussion on one of the most pathetic situations in the world today — that of children affected by armed conflict.

I should also like to extend my delegation's sincere appreciation to two leading and dedicated advocates for children in the United Nations family: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for their informative and, indeed, instructive, account and picture of the situation of children victims of armed conflict.

This meeting is the logical follow-up to that convened by the Security Council yesterday on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In our statement yesterday, my delegation spoke of the need to acknowledge that the illicit trade in those weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

It is a threat that must been seen in the context of the unnecessary suffering that it has caused and that it continues to inflict on innocent children throughout the world, especially in developing countries such as Sierra Leone.

From what we have experienced in Sierra Leone and other parts of the West African subregion, one has every reason to conclude that the illicit trade in and circulation of small arms and light weapons promotes extreme cruelty against and by children. It helps to create child combatants and child perpetrators of heinous crimes against not only adults, but also children. In short, it creates the condition in which children become the victims and perpetrators of such practices as rape, abduction, amputation, sexual slavery and wanton and indiscriminate killing.

All children, whether or not they are currently affected by armed conflict, will be the principal beneficiaries of measures now under way to prevent, combat and eradicate the scourge of the illicit trade in these weapons — what one could describe as weapons of mass destruction because of the magnitude and devastation they have caused to human life and property. We are by no means exaggerating the linkage between the illicit flow of small arms and the terrible situation in which children find themselves in areas of conflict. This linkage is a reality; it is a challenge which we must all accept.

My delegation welcomes with appreciation the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the protection of children in armed conflict. The list of advances made over the past few years towards the protection of children affected by armed conflict is encouraging. It covers many of the important legal and political measures taken by States and international and regional organizations. The list and the report as a whole also affirm the crucial role that public advocacy, such as that undertaken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and non-governmental organizations, can continue to play in the complex task of ensuring effective protection of war-affected children.

In this regard, we note some of the measures contained in the report that pertain directly to the situation in Sierra Leone. Reference is made, for example, to the establishment of the National Commission for War-Affected Children, which was initiated Mr. Otunnu, and the organization of the Children's Forum Network. Reference is also made to the "Voice of Children" radio project, which provides a platform for one of the 10 imperatives endorsed in the worldwide "Say Yes for Children" campaign organized by UNICEF about two years ago — namely, "Listen to children".

An important development that is not in the Secretary-General's report, but that my delegation would like to highlight, is the fact that among the crimes alleged in the recent indictments at the Special Court for Sierra Leone is the use of child combatants. The crime of conscripting and enlisting and/or the use of boys and girls to participate in active hostilities is punishable under article 4 (c) of the Statute of the Special Court. This could serve as a deterrent to future attempts to recruit children for combat and for the purpose of perpetrating acts of sheer brutality.

Just over a year ago, a young Sierra Leonean — a former child combatant — appeared before the Council to relate the story of his abduction and participation in what the Special Court for Sierra Leone has characterized as the "criminal enterprise". Articulating his vision of life after a brutal conflict, the young man also brought a message — a signpost, so to speak — which the Security Council should follow in devising ways and means of advancing the promotion and protection of the rights of children, especially those affected by armed conflict. This is a very important development in the area of accountability that should not go unnoticed.

Although the rebel war in Sierra Leone and the recruitment and participation of child combatants is no longer an issue, and although disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes are under way in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, we are seriously concerned about the cross-border movement of armed children and youth in the subregion. These are "the new home-grown mercenaries" who, for one reason or the other, slip through DDR programmes, regroup and create new pockets of armed rebellion aimed at ruthless and protracted destabilization of the subregion. They are also the precursors of urban criminal elements in post-conflict situations.

We note that on the list of recent advances towards the protection of children in armed conflict, the Secretary-General highlights, among other things, the fact that children's issues have been incorporated into peace agreements and peace accords. This is

commendable, since those agreements also include provisions for disarmament and demobilization.

The Sierra Leone delegation endorses the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, especially those relating to concrete measures that the Security Council can take in the context of its responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. These measures should include, where necessary and appropriate, targeted arms embargoes and travel restrictions. However, effective monitoring mechanisms would have to be put in place.

We wish also to recall Ms. Bellamy's statement this morning that funding should not entirely depend on voluntary contributions. She stated that resources need to be made available for child demobilization as early as possible, well before the DDR process. We attach great importance to this.

In his final recommendation, in paragraph 105, the Secretary-General rightly suggests that greater and more concerted efforts should be deployed to end ongoing conflicts — conflicts that we agree are destroying the lives of millions of children. He adds that efforts should be made to address "the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts".

My delegation interprets this as a call for concerted efforts for the prevention of armed conflict. If indeed we are committed to the promotion and protection of children, particularly those affected by armed conflict, we should also deal with the root causes of armed conflict, especially those that are directly linked to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and in precious natural resources, such as diamonds from Sierra Leone. The prescriptions we are preparing and administering are essential, but they must be accompanied by preventive measures. As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure.

Since the United Nations is now fully aware of the international dimensions of these phenomena, and in view of their implications for international peace and security, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the Security Council to assume a more proactive role in the search for concrete and effective solutions, as well as preventive measures, for our children's sake.

Meanwhile, my delegation looks forward to the results of the comprehensive assessment now being undertaken by the Secretary-General of the scope and effectiveness of the response by the United Nations system to the issue of children in armed conflict, with a view to strengthening, mainstreaming, integrating and sustaining these activities.

Mr. Wagaba (Uganda): I would like to thank the Security Council for allowing my delegation to address it on this important issue of children and armed conflict.

My delegation has carefully studied and taken note of the fourth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, contained in document S/2003/1053. The report covers a wide range of conflict situations in which children have faced grave human rights violations, including abduction, forced recruitment into armed groups, rape, maiming and killing. The report also proposes a number of measures aimed at addressing those violations and punishing the perpetrators. The report also contains, in annexes, two lists of alleged violators.

Uganda is a strong supporter of the rights of children. Uganda ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16 September 1990; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 6 June 2002; and acceded to the Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography on 18 January 2002. Uganda therefore applauds all measures meant to ensure the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. In fact, the Government signed, on 4 December 2003, a memorandum of understanding with Save the Children/Denmark's Uganda Country Programme to implement a project on strengthening the capacity of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) in the area of child rights.

My delegation wishes specifically to address paragraph 63 of the report, as well as the list contained in Annex II to the report, in which references are made to the Uganda People's Defence Forces and to Local Defence Units allied to the UPDF. Paragraph 63 reads as follows:

> "The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and its allied Local Defence Units (LDUs) recruit and use children. UPDF has also re-recruited children who have escaped or been

rescued from LRA. In a UNICEF/Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs screening, 120 recruits in the UPDF Lugore military training camp were reported to be children under the age of 18, some of whom had been demobilized."

It is the policy of the Uganda Government not to recruit anyone under the age of 18 into the Uganda armed forces, including the Local Defence Units. This policy is strictly observed by the UPDF, and this fact is well known even to the Uganda Office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In those few cases in which recruits are discovered to have sneaked in because of lack of proof of age, such as birth certificates, they are always thrown out as soon as they are discovered. That was the case in the incident referred to in the Secretary-General's report, where, at Lugore military training camp in the Gulu district, a screening done in conjunction with UNICEF last August uncovered a number of underage recruits into the LDUs. Those recruits were promptly discharged.

However, it should be noted that, with the high rate of unemployment in the Ugandan countryside, coupled with the low standard of education, many people view military service as the easiest way of getting a job. Therefore, it is common for members of the community to deceive recruiters about their age in order to be enlisted. Additionally, in the face of the constant abductions of children by the so-called Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in that area, many parents feel it is much safer to have them join the local militia or the army rather than the rebels.

The situation in northern Uganda, where the Government has been battling a bandit outfit, the so-called Lord's Resistance Army, for many years, is well-known to the international community. In this regard, my delegation is grateful to the representatives of the United States and of the United Kingdom, who, in their statements this morning, gave graphic and accurate accounts of the atrocities being perpetrated against children in northern Uganda by the LRA.

That organization, which has been placed on the list of terrorist organizations by the United States State Department, has been carrying out, and continues to carry out, horrendous and savage acts of brutality against innocent people in northern Uganda, including women and children. Over the years, tens of thousands of children, boys and girls, have been abducted from their homes or schools and taken into captivity by the LRA. They are forcibly recruited into fighting. Girls are forced to become sex slaves by the rebel leaders. Others have been savagely maimed or brutally murdered. All of those acts are well known and have been documented by UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies and non-governmental organizations active in the region.

In his statement to the Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland had this to say on the situation in northern Uganda:

> "For example, on my recent mission to Uganda, I saw a stark picture of what the absence of humanitarian access means. Outside the main northern and eastern towns, access has been dramatically reduced by the increased activity of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Some 1.3 million people have been displaced by the war. Many of those people are living in 'resettlement camps' in inaccessible areas, with severely limited access to their lands, to their livelihoods, and to humanitarian assistance". *(S/PV.4877, p. 3)*

This is the humanitarian tragedy that has been forced on our people by the inhuman acts of the LRA. The Government of Uganda is dedicated to ending those terrorist acts, and in fact President Museveni has been stationed in northern Uganda for more than one year now to personally oversee the efforts towards ending the reign of terror of the LRA.

It is therefore right and proper that the LRA should appear on the list contained in annex II of the Secretary-General's report. That organization should be condemned by all right-thinking people, and every pressure should be brought to bear on it and its leadership so that it ceases its inhuman actions. Its leaders should be apprehended wherever they are and brought to justice to answer for their crimes against humanity.

However, my Government is outraged that the Secretary-General's report should purport to mention the UPDF in the same breath as the LRA. It is outrageous not only because the allegations against the UPDF are not true and have been repeatedly denied by the Uganda Government but also because the author of the report, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Under-Secretary-General Olara Otunnu, has been

invited on numerous occasions by the Uganda Government to visit Uganda or send a team there to investigate the situation on the ground. On all those occasions, Ambassador Olara Otunnu did not find it fit to go to Uganda or to send a mission there but instead has chosen to rely on hearsay information gathered on visits to neighbouring countries.

The Uganda Government is baffled by this hostile attitude on the part of Ambassador Olara Otunnu. This concern of my Government has been brought to the attention of the Secretary-General by my President, President Museveni, when he met the Secretary-General in May 2002 and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in his letter to the Secretary-General in May 2002. The same concern has been expressed by the former Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations in his letter to the President of the Security Council dated 16 January 2003 (S/2003/124), as well as the current Permanent Representative in his letter to the President of the Security Council dated 4 December 2003 and circulated as Security Council document S/2003/1160. In all those communications, the Uganda Government has reiterated its open invitation to the Special Representative to visit Uganda or to send an investigative mission, but the invitation has been ignored to date.

The Government of Uganda is left with no alternative but to assume that Ambassador Olara Otunnu has an axe to grind with the current Government in Uganda. It must be remembered that Ambassador Otunnu was born in Uganda and is a native of the very area in northern Uganda where the LRA is carrying out those atrocities. Ambassador Otunnu was, as a matter of fact, Foreign Minister in the brutal military regime which was removed in 1986 through popular resistance and replaced by the present Government. Since 1986, Ambassador Otunnu has not stepped inside Uganda for reasons best known to himself. Furthermore, he has ignored the plight of the people of northern Uganda during his tenure as Special Representative.

If the recommendations contained in the report were to be implemented against the Uganda Government, it would certainly weaken the Government's capacity to protect its citizens against the attacks of LRA. It is the sincere hope and expectation of the Uganda Government that the Council will not allow Ambassador Otunnu to use the cover of the authority and office of the Secretary-General to advance his own personal hostile agenda against Uganda. My delegation strongly urges the Security Council to reject the listing of the Uganda People's Defence Forces, as well as the Local Defence Units allied to the UPDF, in annex II to the Secretary-General's report. We further urge the Security Council to demand that the Special Representative send a mission to Uganda to specifically investigate the allegations contained in paragraph 63 of the report before taking action on it.

The President: I call on the representative of India.

Mr. Nambiar (India): Your delegation has been sedulous, Madam President, in pursuing this month an agenda of important though sombre thematic issues for the consideration of the Council. This open meeting of the Council on children and armed conflict deals with one such issue. For those who believe the poet who said that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy", the "shades of the prison-house" that "begin to close upon the growing boy" would appear to have a context not quite apposite to the theme of today's debate. But they most certainly describe the plight of many children in different parts of the world caught up in the vicious grip of conflicts they hardly understand but find themselves hopelessly enmeshed in.

Children have become increasingly involved in conflicts, both as targets of violence and as combatants. During the last few years, more than 500,000 children, recruited in 87 countries, with approximately 300,000 actively participating in combat, have been involved in conflict in some form or another. Aged generally between 15 and 18 and some as young as seven, child soldiers are often in support services. The rise in intra-State conflicts, compounded by conditions such as internal displacement and refugee situations, has caused the phenomenon of the child-soldier. It is often impossible to make a distinction between a forced and a voluntary child soldier. Whereas some children join armed groups for food, survival or to avenge atrocities committed in their communities, others are physically abducted for war by armed groups. Enticed by promises of food, shelter and security and sometimes plied with drugs, child soldiers are at times led to commit atrocities against other armed groups and civilian populations, sometimes even against their own communities.

The use of children in armed conflict has been aggravated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons worldwide. These weapons are inexpensive, durable, small, lightweight, easy to maintain and small enough for them to handle. Illegal arms trafficking and poor monitoring of the legal trade make it easy for them to gain access to such weapons. It cannot be denied that in many conflict situations, the most vulnerable members of the population, particularly women and children, are targeted with impunity. While no leniency should be shown on crimes perpetrated against innocent children, we need to see in perspective the fact that many children responsible for reprehensible crimes have often been manipulated by unscrupulous adults to take part in armed conflicts.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, deserves our commendation for his statement and comprehensive report (S/2003/1053). We note his recommendations on the road ahead, including the challenge of launching the campaign for an "era of application". The report demonstrates that significant progress has been made in the mandate of incorporating the impact of armed conflict on children in the international peace and security agenda.

Before commenting on the specifics in the report of the Secretary-General, a few general points made in the past by the Indian delegation may need reiteration.

The first relates to salience. How useful is it to have thematic debates in the Security Council on subjects such as the present one? It is true that a large number of children are victims of armed conflicts. But it is also a fact that malaria and AIDS kill more children than conflicts do, but in the Council we do not deal separately with children and malaria or children and AIDS or request reports from the Secretary-General on them. An unconscionable number of children have died as a result of sanctions, but we do not recall the Council holding a debate on the effect of sanctions on children or seeking a report from the Secretary-General on that subject either. A sense of balance and perspective should be retained in order to make sure that too narrow a focus does not blot out the larger picture of what the Secretary-General has designated as the soft challenges to international peace and security.

The second point relates to applicability. There are recommendations relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol and to international humanitarian law. No role is envisaged in any of these conventions or other legal instruments for the Security Council in promoting their implementation. While only States are parties to conventions, non-State actors are not bound by them. More important, most armed groups obey no laws, national or international. In some cases of internal conflict, non-State actors or rival political groupings may make offers to adhere to such instruments precisely to gain legitimacy or a political locus standi. Who is to decide whether they are entitled to that or not?

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) refers to the comprehensive body of instruments, norms and commitments that provide a basis for enforcement of the protection and rights of children exposed to armed conflict. While adhering States stand automatically committed and accountable to such norms, the accountability of non-State actors has not been adequately considered or documented. Many of them are infused by religious or political ideology, economic interests or simply outmoded or feudalistic social beliefs and are known for their gross, massive and systematic violations of the rights of children. We would urge the Special Representative to pay greater attention to that aspect, for it, in our view, is the root cause of many of the problems in this area.

Similarly, we would sound a note of caution on the recommendation to establish a dialogue and engage in negotiations with parties to armed conflict, particularly when such parties are non-State actors. Non-State actors are not bound by any legal obligations or commitments, as they have not assumed any such. By initiating a dialogue and engaging in negotiations, we should not encourage a process that would confer on them any legitimacy that they should not have.

The report does catalogue the deployment of child protection advisers in many peacekeeping operations. It is not clear, however, whether any assessment has been made of their work in the area of child protection and the involvement of children in armed conflict. A purposive audit of the efforts undertaken so far in the area is missing in the report. It could have been more useful if the recommendations had built on the lessons learned after providing a critical assessment of the work accomplished in this area. That would have added to the efficacy of the recommended measures.

In the subsection on monitoring and reporting, there is a conclusion that a body of standards constitutes the basis for monitoring. The list consists of a number of instruments that do not command universal acceptance or adherence. How does the Special Representative expect to deal with monitoring the situation of a Member State that is not party to the Optional Protocol, the Statute of the International Criminal Court or ILO Convention 182? The Member State in question — while otherwise committed to the norms and commitments concerning the promotion and protection of the rights of children — would be right in maintaining that it was not bound by any instrument to which it was not a party. The Special Representative must recognize that neither he nor anyone else, for that matter, can seek to impose on Member States the standards derived from these non-universal instruments.

We should like to voice one more concern about the agenda for monitoring and reporting. There is well-established machinery for dealing with alleged violations of human rights by the Government of a State that is party to a specific human rights instrument. The procedures in that respect are well-known and time-honoured. The likely interface between that procedure and the monitoring-reporting mechanism that would come into existence as a result of the Special Representative's recommendations is not at all clear to us. Moreover, the treaty bodies have their own system of dealing with non-compliance by parties with their treaty obligations. There is the ever-present danger of duplication and overlap.

With respect to information gathering and data collection, the report seeks to set much store by information collected from non-governmental organizations. But it is not clear which non-governmental organizations would be depended on, how they would be chosen, how their credentials would be vetted or which type of reliability test would be applied to the information and data provided by the non-governmental organizations.

In the area of monitoring and verification, the report recommends that increasing use be made of the field presence of the United Nations. That raises some pertinent questions. Do the country teams — particularly the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) — have the necessary expertise to perform that function? Would it be within their mandates? Will UNICEF have the necessary expertise at the field level to perform such functions wherever it is called upon to do so?

One final point relates to the attempts to expand on the areas of consideration of the Security Council to include, for example, effective monitoring of "especially egregious violations", as mentioned in paragraph 81 of the report. While one cannot but recognize the motives behind the strenuous efforts to cover the entire gamut of violations that could affect children directly or indirectly, it must be said that there are other United Nations bodies — such as the Commission on Human Rights — that are mandated to undertake such tasks. By taking a continuously expansionist role for itself, the Security Council would not only overlap its functioning with that of other mandated United Nations bodies, but would also be committing its valuable time and resource allocations to functions best handled elsewhere.

These concerns are not raised with a view to belittling the importance of the problem or the urgency of the need to deal with it. Any breakdown of peace and security and the ensuing conflict can be expected to have a tragic impact on children. All Member States have a duty to soften the effects of armed conflicts on children, because they are innocent and vulnerable and should not be made to suffer. However, we feel that we ought to make decisions and act in ways that will lead to effective results. We should also bear in mind the need for obtaining the most efficient and optimal results, as the resources that are dedicated to any of these mandates are finite and inelastic, especially in an era of zero-nominal growth in most United Nations budgets. We should strive for increasing efficiency, cost-effectiveness and impact while dealing with this important question of protecting children from the effects of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We warmly welcome you, Madam, as you preside over this meeting. Your concern demonstrates the attention that you and your friendly country, Chile, devote to the grave challenges facing future generations and the need to confront them.

We should like to thank Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children

and Armed Conflict, for their briefings this morning. We believe that the contents of those briefings will help us to make progress in confronting the challenge of the plight of children in armed conflicts.

My delegation has carefully read the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) now before us, and we believe that we should all pay heed to it. We thank the Secretary-General and all those who helped to prepare and enrich the report.

International conventions on the protection and well-being of children, Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the protection of children in armed conflict and the final document of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to children (resolution S-27/2), held in 2002, all strengthen and supplement international norms and should be respected by everyone.

Progress made in the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as described in the Secretary-General's report, is a source of satisfaction, and we welcome it. We have noted a strong will by the parties concerned with this issue to face up to the challenges before them. Nevertheless, and most regrettably, we see no concrete progress in protecting the children affected by the Israeli occupation of Arab land, including the occupied Syrian Golan. The grave situation remains and has indeed deteriorated.

The international community has been unable, to date, to implement international provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, let alone the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions related to the protection of Palestinian children, who, for decades, have been living a miserable life. Let me mention that, while we highly appreciate the reference in the report (S/2003/1053) to the fact that the situation of Palestinian children remains serious and unacceptable, we had hoped that the report would devote some ink to the issues related to the effects of preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching children affected by armed conflicts.

The report of the Secretary-General contains proposals and recommendations that are worthy of study, particularly in light of practices and lessons learned. While we believe that there is a need for a coordinated and systematic mechanism for monitoring and reporting in order to present objective, regular and accurate reports on violations by parties to armed conflicts, we believe that such a question should not be politicized and that selectivity and double standards should be avoided. Furthermore, all possible means for dialogue and negotiation with the parties concerned ought to be used to solve all problems in accordance with agreed norms.

Let me again stress the importance of the role of all United Nations bodies, particularly the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in confronting the effects of conflicts and wars on children. In addition to the agencies and funds of the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), let me also stress the role of non-governmental organizations, which are fundamental in complementing and promoting international efforts in the appropriate manner and in strengthening our collective efforts to resolve this problem.

Allow me to conclude my statement by stressing that Syria attaches the utmost importance, at all levels, to the issues of children. Syria was one of the first States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Last year, we ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the second Optional Protocol on sexual abuse of children. These commitments stem from our belief that such international instruments are a fundamental basis for the international community to take action to protect and promote the rights of children for a better future for mankind.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, I should like, at the outset, to express the appreciation of the Egyptian delegation to you and your friendly country for having convened this important meeting. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for their efforts and their precious contribution to promoting and protecting the rights of children in armed conflicts. I should also like to pay tribute to Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for the efforts she continues to make in promoting and protecting the rights of the child. My country is fully committed to supporting all efforts in that regard.

For a number of years now, the Security Council has been paying particular attention to the issue of refugee children, internally displaced children forced to flee their homes and those who have been forcefully recruited or sexually abused, with particular attention to girls, because they are most vulnerable to threats, particularly sexual violence. This is a commendable effort that we support and look forward to continuing. However, I should like to draw the attention of this Council to a category of children who seem to have been forgotten, that is, children under foreign occupation, particularly those children in occupied Palestinian territory who die daily because of continuing violations of their human rights and the brutal use of force. It is sufficient to quickly look at the numbers of child victims of the conflict to see the importance of taking up this issue and shedding light on it. We therefore call on the Security Council to take up the issue of children under foreign occupation. We call on the Council not to politicize the issue and to deal with this category of children with the same attention that it devoted to other groups of children in armed conflicts.

I should like to express my appreciation for the call for the deployment of advisors on child protection and for increasing their role in peacekeeping operations in order to effectively incorporate the rights of children and their protection and welfare in those operations. The experience of advisors in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Côte d'Ivoire has shown their effectiveness. We hope that this will continue, that more advisors will be deployed to confront the issues of children. Experience shows that they are most effective in awareness-raising regarding children's rights and the need to protect children in peacekeeping operations, as well as in training personnel, both military and civilian, in peacekeeping operations. Their presence has been most effective in giving priority to children's issues through better monitoring and reporting, through the provision of services and by facilitating the flow of information between various elements of peacekeeping operations.

Perhaps one of the most important steps taken by the Security Council since the issuance of the Secretary-General's report last year on the issue of children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299) was the setting up of a list of particular countries and parties that violate the rights of children. This issue requires further study in order to ascertain the way to deal with those parties that violate the rights of children, how to prosecute such parties and how to ensure that such violations do not occur in the future.

We regret the continuing violations of the rights of children in Burundi, in Côte d'Ivoire, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Liberia and in other countries. This proves the importance of further intensifying efforts in the future to eradicate such violations. In this regard, we would stress the importance of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report as well as the measures proposed, including mainstreaming the issues of children in a systematic manner in all peace negotiations and agreements and rendering them essential in all post-conflict programmes. We would also stress the need for a systematic mechanism for monitoring and reporting for the presentation of objective, accurate and regular reports on violations of the rights of children by parties to conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me, Madame, to express my delegation's pleasure at seeing you personally presiding over this meeting. Your presence here — in addition to the fact that your country, Chile, is a member of the Human Security Network, on behalf of which I have the honour to speak — attests to your interest to human rights in general and in the rights of the child, in particular.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Human Security Network, namely Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Norway, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and my own country, Mali — which holds the chairmanship of the Network — and South Africa in its capacity of observer on the item under review, entitled "Children and armed conflict".

Allow me to congratulate the Secretary-General of our Organization, as well as his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, on the high quality of the report published in document S/2003/1053, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1460 (2003). I should also like to thank Ms. Carol Bellamy for her statement.

Resolution 1460 (2003), adopted just under a year ago, noted with alarm the persistence of the phenomenon of children's recruitment and use by parties to armed conflicts. The Security Council invited the Secretary-General to enter into dialogue with those parties with a view to putting an end to such practices. To that end, the parties were to provide information on steps they had taken to halt the recruitment or use of children in armed conflicts. The Council also expressed its intention to consider taking appropriate steps to resolve this issue it if deemed that insufficient progress had been made upon the review of the next Secretary-General's report.

It is evident, however, that, a year since that warning was issued, little has been achieved in the way of results. In fact, the recruitment and use of children have persisted over the course of the period under review. The Secretary-General's report even mentions new parties that have taken up those criminal practices.

Of course, there have been perceptible advances in recent years in terms of the scope of international instruments. I refer, notably, to the nearly universal Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

The Rome Statute and the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour also merit mention, as do regional conventions, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are a reference point for international humanitarian law on the subject. This legal arsenal is supplemented by the Plan of Action — best known under the name "A World Fit for Children" — adopted in 2002 by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh special session, as well as by Security Council resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 1460 (2003). The Human Security Network's member countries encourage those States that have not yet done so to ratify the instruments aimed at protecting children exposed to armed conflict.

The development of international standards is not an end in itself. The ultimate objective and major challenge lie in their implementation. To that end, in 2002 the Secretary-General proposed the ushering in of an era of application. The report submitted to the Council highlights some of the concrete measures adopted, such as the inclusion of children's concerns in peace accords; civil society involvement in actions aimed at raising public awareness and advocacy; the adoption of guidelines and plans of action, such as those adopted by the Economic Community of West African States in 2000 and by the European Union in 2003; the establishment of national commissions for the benefit of war-affected children; the adoption of measures aimed at curbing the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources in war zones; the consideration of children's specific needs in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; and the deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations.

Those measures, however systematically applied, should not make us lose sight of the particularly egregious violations and abuses committed against children over the past year. I call to mind not only the phenomenon of child soldiers — an occurrence further aggravated by the illicit proliferation of small arms — but also the massacre and mutilation of children, particularly of girls, that have taken place. Armed groups have continued to abduct children, either to forcibly enlist or sexually exploit them, as is often the case for young girls, or to press them into forced labour. Children also fall victim to landmines and unexploded ordnance.

In the face of these overwhelming facts, the Human Security Network has endorsed the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. Its members are particularly convinced that credible deterrence can be achieved in particular through action by the Security Council, which we invite to take measures targeting parties and their accomplices, including the imposition of travel restrictions on their leaders, their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions before the International Criminal Court, and a ban on the export or supply of small arms. The recommendations require, finally, addressing the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts — their root causes.

The Human Security Network also urges widening the scope of the list of parties that recruit or use children in armed conflict to cover all situations where these parties exist. Wherever they occur, international crimes committed against children in a situation of war merit the attention and action of the

international community, in particular those of the Security Council.

The Network is committed to pursuing concrete action in order to prevent violations of children's rights where conflict situations emerge, in the course of a conflict or post-conflict, and in terms of assistance to child victims of armed conflicts. This was inspired by the overall goal of bridging the gaps between universal human rights standards and their implementation and between programmatic concepts and systematic response on the ground. With this in view, the Human Security Network has developed a support strategy that identifies a set of operative principles, including enhanced follow-up and training and an alarm function in cases of child rights violations.

The Network has also developed a child rights training curriculum which serves as a comprehensive check list that contains relevant principles, guidelines and references, as well as exemplary training modules, so as to be adaptable to specific situations on the ground and to target groups to be trained. The programme has been made available to the Secretary-General and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. We express the hope that it will be used effectively in training courses held by all the agencies and programmes of the United Nations and other interested organizations and Governments.

In this regard, in its medium-term work plan for 2003-2005 — adopted in Graz, Austria — the Human Security Network has committed itself to working with United Nations bodies, Governments that share its vision, regional and subregional organizations and civil society towards the implementation of current commitments, which for the most part are integrated into the Secretary-General's report.

Finally, the Human Security Network welcomes the reaffirmation, contained in paragraph 15 of the report under review, of its commitment to children in armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Mali for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

The next speaker is the representative of Japan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ozawa (Japan): My delegation would like to express its gratitude to you, Madam, and to the Security Council, for having provided us with an opportunity to address the issue of children and armed conflict. This debate comes at an opportune time, as new post-conflict situations are emerging in Africa, and as new actions — in the form of the creation of political missions or peacekeeping operations — may be taken by the Security Council.

Currently, a major newspaper in Japan is running a series of feature articles on the real experiences of child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Liberia, accompanied by photographs showing them carrying Kalashinikov rifles. For many of us living in peace, the concept of child soldiers — 11-year-old girls and 10-year-old boys — is almost surreal, almost incomprehensible. Yet those images are real. We need to help, and we can do so more effectively once the conflicts have ended.

Japan believes that the "Back to School" campaigns run by the United Nations Children's Fund are among the most important ongoing efforts to rebuild societies in post-conflict situations. We are proud to be supporting those programmes in Afghanistan and, now, in Iraq. They help alleviate the trauma of individual children who have endured so much during armed conflict and give hope to their communities for a better future. As a nation promoting the concept of human security, Japan will continue to work together with relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to promote the empowerment of communities, with an emphasis on children and women.

A number of international instruments exist that aim to protect children in armed conflicts: I need hardly mention the historic significance of the comprehensive framework of the Geneva Convention. The international community has striven to improve the level of protection for children in armed conflict. Two Protocols additional to the Geneva Convention — for which we intend to obtain parliamentary approval this year — include specific provisions concerning the protection of children. The basic principle behind such provisions evolved into the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. The Rome Statute, the establishment of which Japan consistently supported, stipulates that the use of children as soldiers in armed conflict is a war crime. In line with such developments on the legal front concerning the protection of children, Japan signed, in May 2002, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed

conflict, and we intend to obtain parliamentary approval for its ratification this year. We sincerely hope that other nations that have not yet ratified that important instrument will do so soon.

My delegation would like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for the exemplary work he has done over the past six years in raising the awareness of the international community of the issue of children and armed conflict. Child protection advisers are now appointed to relevant peacekeeping operations, and United Nations agencies are now better prepared to deal with this issue.

At the same time, the issue of children and armed conflict is becoming more and more complex. In order to better tackle those complexities, a more comprehensive approach and better collaboration among United Nations agencies are necessary. In this context, we welcomed the decision of the General Assembly, at its fifty-seventh session, to request the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to this issue. That report has yet to be submitted. We hope that it will be issued in the near future and that it will provide us with useful guidance in our discussions on this issue.

We believe that on the issue of children and armed conflict, the time has come for us to move from advocacy to implementation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Costa Rica, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Stagno Ugarte (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first of all to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you, Madam Minister, presiding over the Security Council's debate on this very important issue. I would also like to express my gratitude for the briefings provided this morning by Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

The protection of children during armed conflict must occupy a priority position on the Security Council's agenda. The world's children are the most vulnerable group in times of war, and they therefore deserve to be the first to be protected. Today, almost 300,000 boys and girls are direct participants in armed conflict, whether as combatants, spies or in another capacity. Millions more are indirect victims of conflict. Thousands of children are killed or wounded as part of the collateral damage of armed encounters. Many suffer from hunger and thirst; thousands more are orphaned or abandoned, or become refugees or internally displaced persons. Hundreds of minors are victims of sexual abuse. Furthermore, the great majority of children caught up in armed conflict lose the chance of an education, and almost all of them are scarred by the psychological trauma of war.

A year ago, when adopting resolution 1460 (2003), the Security Council called upon the entire international community to abide by international standards and principles concerning the protection of children affected by armed conflict. There is no doubt that over the past year there has been some progress. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has been working tirelessly to make the parties to conflict sensitive to the suffering of minors who are combatants and victims of war.

Efforts have been made to include the problems of children in the peace processes in Sri Lanka and the Sudan. Efforts have been made to establish a better dialogue with regional organizations, and national commissions for war-affected children have been set up. The General Assembly has strengthened and secured the budget of the Special Representative's Office.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) also represents an important step forward, as it provides an updated list of groups that recruit children in situations under the Council's purview, as well as a list relating to situations not yet on the Council's agenda.

In some parts of the world, however, the situation of minors worsened considerably over the past year. Several non-governmental organizations have reported massive increases in the kidnapping and forced recruitment of minors in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Myanmar, by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and by the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Much work certainly remains to be done.

I should like to point out just some of the measures that the Security Council will have to adopt as a result of this debate in order to protect minors in

armed conflict. First, this body must demand that all the entities on the two lists annexed to the Secretary-General's report refrain from recruiting minors and demobilize those already recruited. The Council must give such entities a deadline for presenting evidence of having taken measures to halt the recruitment of minors, to punish those who continue to recruit them and to demobilize child combatants. If no positive response is received, the Council should impose sanctions, such as embargoes on arms and funds, against entities that continue to use child soldiers. It is crucial, in this context, that the Secretary-General maintain and periodically update the two lists of entities that recruit minors or use child soldiers.

Secondly, it is indispensable that the topic of the protection of minors be systematically incorporated into all the activities of the United Nations. Any resolution adopted by the Security Council must include clear and comprehensive provisions aimed at protecting the safety and the fundamental rights of minors. Plans for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants and peace-building programmes must seek the rehabilitation of minors who are combatants or victims of conflict.

Every peacekeeping operation must include child protection advisers to deal with the problems of children victims of conflict. Before any sanctions regime is adopted, the Security Council should evaluate the possible impact of such sanctions on children. Every sanctions regime must include exceptions aimed at minimizing the detrimental effects it might have on children.

Thirdly, the Council should create permanent institutional machinery that will enable it regularly to monitor in a proactive and comprehensive manner the situation of minors in armed conflict. Such a body should receive periodic reports on violations of the rights of children in situations of armed conflict and must be able to rely on an independent group of experts that can evaluate any information objectively, undertake fact-finding missions to verify allegations, and sound the alarm whenever a situation arises in which the safety of minors is endangered.

Fourthly, the Council must support and lend momentum to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his special representatives to sensitize the parties to conflict to the problems affecting minors.

Finally, as we said last year, it is indispensable for the Secretary-General to refer to the Security Council for its consideration, in keeping with Article 99 of the Charter, any situation of armed conflict in which children under 18 are being recruited or used as combatants.

A year ago, the Security Council committed itself to adopting the necessary to protect minors in armed conflicts. The time has now come to do so, and we must take action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Costa Rica for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): Madam President, my delegation congratulates you and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency and for the consecutive open debates on small arms and light weapons yesterday and on children and armed conflict today.

We would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for their briefings.

Both issues — small arms and light weapons, and children in armed conflict — complement the broader question of women and peace and security. These concerns are of key importance to this body, reflecting the Council's maturity and wisdom and its desire to "look behind the veil" of international peace and security. This trend is aiding the Council to consolidate its mandate, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations, resolutely partnering in its actions with the General Assembly, with the ultimate goal finally to make a difference in the lives of people.

When the Council's deliberations on these subjects empower vulnerable citizens and give voice to the weak, these outcomes become the measure of its success. The Secretary-General's report on the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict shows a genuine change in attitudes and political commitments as to how children fare in armed conflict. The improved understanding of the political economy of armed conflicts, particularly their impact on children, is also

cause for celebration. We also note that more work remains.

We draw courage from the regional strategy of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. However, my delegation believes that, while Commonwealth efforts will eventually filter down to its constituent subregions, the Pacific Islands Forum region needs to be flagged in the Special Representative's calendar in his agenda for action. This would work well in conjunction with the regional security efforts taking shape within the Biketawa Declaration and also promote the effectiveness of the cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum.

Part of the success of the Organization's mandate on the subject is due to the recognition, in the elaboration of international norms, of the impact of armed conflict on children. We heard directly from children from war-torn regions or from those coming out of prolonged conflicts during the special session of the General Assembly on children. They spoke with a maturity and clarity that are often associated only with adult experiences. No doubt, many more children have been exposed to those kinds of experiences.

"Marie in the Shadow of a Lion" is a remarkable compilation of real testimonies by children who have undergone such experiences. We therefore support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to use it in a pilot programme and to include it in educational curricula in this future era of application. Existing mechanisms can be reconfigured to support those efforts and obviate the need to reinvent the wheel. As national human rights institutions gain greater knowledge and expertise, they can assist Governments and regional organizations in incorporating the appropriate knowledge into national educational systems and programmes.

This fourth open debate should serve to recall Graça Machel's plea to humankind to respect childhood as inviolate and to consider children as zones of peace. Today, unfortunately, the recruitment of children continues unabated, and the abuse of children occurs with alarming frequency, making it incumbent on the Security Council to show results from — or at least create mechanisms for the realization of — the provisions of its resolutions. The Council needs, for instance, to keep its focus current and dynamic.

Yearly updates of its child soldiers list, such as the ones included in annexes I and II to the Secretary-General's report, represent a practical instrument for monitoring the situation. However, those lists need to reflect feedback from the parties on the list every year. The Council may offer its expertise to those other parties that need help in formulating and implementing action plans. Member States, especially those that are parties to the Optional Protocol, need a facility that will enable them regularly to report on their compliance in a less cumbersome format. Yesterday we all heard calls to end the flow of weapons, a phenomenon that is instrumental in the recruitment and abuse of children.

Smart sanctions or bans of other targeted measures may be invoked by the Council as expressions of its distaste for a phenomenon that, sadly, has characterized our lifetime. We hope that this stage of human civilization will go down in history as one of heightened respect for human dignity, and consciousness of, and sensitivity to, human rights. The scourge of children in armed conflict taints the enlightenment that has been achieved. We have to consolidate our gains and forge ahead, in a holistic manner, in the era of application, with the advocacy, interventions, campaigns and other creative measures which the Secretary-General has devised.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Fiji for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Ecuador, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to ask you, Sir, to convey to the Minister my country's gratitude for her presence in this Chamber, which is clear evidence of the high priority she attaches to this issue, which is of such importance to all of us.

Let me express my country's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his clear and detailed report on children and armed conflict contained in document S/2003/1053, in which he gives us an update of the work done and achievements registered in this area. These achievements are very significant, and have, as the Secretary-General states in his report, been particularly notable since 1998 when the item on children and armed conflict was officially incorporated in the Council's agenda.

As the report notes, without doubt, a broad and solid framework enabling the international community to continue working to protect children affected by armed conflict is provided by the machinery relative to this question in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the relevant provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and relevant Security Council resolutions.

In order to ensure the necessary protection of children, especially given the persistence of conflicts of all types in various regions of the world, international instruments must be strengthened, their scope must be extended and they must be effectively implemented and complied with.

The right machinery must be established to ensure that those legal instruments are binding not only for Member States of the international community but also for the irregular groups that exploit children by involving them in armed conflicts. The international community must condemn parties to conflicts that violate the legal and moral norms relative to this issue. Ecuador believes that the international community must work with those demonstrating their determination not to involve children and must act against those who defy that resolve of the majority.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his worthy initiatives, for the commitments achieved in various countries to ensure the welfare and protection of children in conflict and for greatly raising awareness among authorities and the public about the situation of children affected by armed conflict. We also welcome Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, who requested that this issue be included in all resolutions of the Security Council.

One of the saddest and most tragic realities that we have noted in various regions of the world is the profound suffering to which children are exposed as a result of armed conflicts. The report of the Secretary-General takes note of this intolerable reality, including the risks that children face: killings, orphanhood, mutilation, abductions, the denial of education, the lack of health care and grave psychological disorders and trauma. The report also notes the grave situation faced by child refugees and internally displaced children, who are vulnerable to violence, recruitment, sexual exploitation, disease, malnutrition and death.

The report of the Secretary-General underlines the effects on children of the illicit trade in small arms, landmines, munitions and unexploded ordnance and the problems caused by the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. We believe that allowing children to bear arms and participate in violence, conflict and destruction is inhuman and contrary to the highest values of all societies.

Considerable progress has been achieved in ending the recruitment of child soldiers, as noted in the report. However, much remains to be done, many challenges remain ahead. In these circumstances, the international community must give priority attention to this situation by taking more concrete measures to ensure the most basic rights of children and to mitigate and prevent the grave effects of armed conflicts on children. Ecuador supports the proposal the President made this morning on the specific measures that should be adopted.

The results achieved in protecting the rights of children in armed conflicts are praiseworthy. Nevertheless, we hope that all the necessary efforts and actions will be redoubled to alleviate the consequences of armed conflicts on children the world over.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will convey your greetings to the Minister, who had to leave momentarily. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): As stated in the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053), important advances have been made in the efforts to ensure more effective protection of children exposed to armed conflict in the course of the past few years. Yet, the reality on the ground is that, in many conflict situations worldwide, children continue to be abused on a massive and appalling scale.

Against that backdrop, we welcome the increased attention being paid to children's rights and the situation of children in conflicts. In our view, it is especially important that the challenge of protecting civilians in armed conflict, in particular children, takes its rightful place as an integral part of all relevant

matters dealt with by the Security Council. We welcome the progressive engagement of the Council. The four resolutions devoted to the issue of war-affected children are milestones in our efforts to safeguard children's rights in armed conflict, and we must ensure their effective follow-up and implementation.

We are deeply concerned about the situation in northern Uganda, where children are being abducted and recruited as soldiers in large numbers. Our hope is that a peace agreement between the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement may open a window of opportunity to solve this issue. We commend and support recent initiatives by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to bring the situation in northern Uganda to the attention of the international community.

Many children who have experienced armed conflict have been traumatized emotionally and physically. Not least girls, who are especially vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. We must therefore take special account of children's needs in peace operations and negotiations. The rehabilitation of war-affected children through trauma counselling, health services and schooling is important in terms of providing a future for those children. In Norway's view, it is therefore important to actively support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that address those challenges.

Experience has shown that education, as a fundamental element in children's development, can prevent children from being used for fighting or other military purposes. We are pleased to note that DDR programmes have become an integral part of peacekeeping operations, but we are concerned that the specific needs of child soldiers have not yet been sufficiently addressed within the overall planning and implementation of those programmes. We therefore welcome the suggestion for an assessment of best practices, as referred to in the Secretary-General's report.

We also welcome the inclusion of child protection advisers in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Angola. It is important that we now assess the working methods and the efforts made by those advisers in order to maximize the effect derived from best practices. Based on that assessment we should consider the inclusion of child protection advisers in all peacekeeping operations.

We welcome as highly appropriate the practice of listing parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict. We call for the list to be updated and circulated regularly. We are also of the opinion that one should consider expanding the list to cover other forms of egregious violations and abuses against children in situations of armed conflict.

The widespread availability of modern lightweight weapons enables children to become efficient soldiers in combat. We must therefore redouble our efforts to establish more efficient mechanisms to reduce easy access to small arms.

Those who are responsible for exploiting children during conflict should not enjoy impunity. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court classifies the enlistment and use of children under age 15 in hostilities, international attacks on hospitals and schools, rape and other grave acts of sexual violence against children as war crimes. We urge those States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute at the earliest possible date.

The best way of protecting children is to prevent armed conflict from breaking out in the first place. That will require fundamental social change in many countries. It will require action against poverty, a breeding ground for human rights violations, that also gives rise to conflicts and child abuse. Conflicts, in turn, reinforce poverty. Therefore, we must intensify our efforts to invest in conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, peace-building and long-term development cooperation. In short, we must make sure that children in conflict areas have a viable alternative to military life.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Laurin (Canada): Canada welcomes this open debate on children and armed conflict, which comes at a critical juncture for child protection efforts. We congratulate you, Mr. President, on having opened this debate with a short video prepared by War Child Canada. So often visuals are more persuasive than words.

We wish to indicate our appreciation, Mr. President, for the presence of your Foreign Minister during the greater part of the day. That is a clear indication of the importance that Chile attaches to this issue.

The Security Council now has at its disposal a substantial international framework for action. That includes Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), as well as complementary resolutions on the protection of civilians, conflict prevention, women and peace and security, and the safety of United Nations and humanitarian personnel. Together with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, those instruments provide us with the tools to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict. Canada encourages those Member States that have not done so to ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. Canada calls to the attention of Member States that the use of child soldiers is classified as a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Unfortunately, egregious violations of the rights of children continue to take place. There is much work that remains to be done. In that regard, we want to thank the Secretary-General for his November report on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053). The mention of specific conflict situations and the naming of parties using children in conflicts represent important steps in efforts to press parties to conflicts to comply with their international obligations.

We were particularly encouraged to see that the report and its annexes include not only country situations already on the Council's agenda — such as those in Afghanistan and Somalia — but also situations equally deserving of the Council's attention, such as the events taking place in northern Uganda. We must think seriously about how we can further induce those parties to conflict to cease their recruitment and use of children. We must ensure that there are serious consequences for those who refuse to comply.

We recognize, however, that the demobilization of child soldiers is not enough. In his report, the Secretary-General highlights the importance of addressing the specific needs of children in our disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts. Girls continue to be left out of DDR programmes. Greater attention by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations is needed to ensure that girl and boy combatants — regardless of how they were recruited or used — are demobilized and gain access to country-specific child protection and reintegration programmes. In addition, in order to be deemed successful, the reintegration of children into their families and communities must include effective strategies to prevent their re-recruitment.

We must not forget that the violations of children's rights that occur in situations of armed conflict are not limited to the conscription of boys and girls into fighting forces. In recognition of that, the Human Security Network has made — and will continue to make — a comprehensive approach to children and armed conflict a priority. In that regard, we fully associate ourselves with the statement made today by the representative of Mali, which holds the chairmanship of the Network.

Similarly, discussions of small arms and light weapons must directly address the implications for children of the proliferation of these weapons. Our work at the international and regional levels must not lose sight of the staggering cost of the misuse of these weapons for children and their communities, as was highlighted by Member States at the First United Nations Biennial Meeting of States on small arms.

(*spoke in French*)

We have learned that, for child protection mechanisms to be effective, we need reliable monitoring and credible reporting with well-articulated follow-up for non-compliance with the standards currently in place. We were pleased that the Council's resolutions on Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo contained important references to children, but, on many occasions, the Council continues to ignore child protection in its country-specific deliberations. We realize that the Council must be provided with relevant and timely information on which to base its actions. To that end, Canada reiterates its appeal to the United Nations Secretariat to formulate concrete advice and recommendations to the Council on country-specific situations, to report systematically on child protection and to provide the Council with the information it needs to act.

However, when such information is provided, the Council must shoulder its responsibilities and take action. For peace operations, its action should include clear mandates and the financial and human resources

required for child protection at the country level. In that regard, the deployment of child protection advisers in peace support operations is an important way to systematically monitor and remedy the specific effects of conflict on children. For example, child protection advisers have had a clearly positive impact on the effectiveness of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we believe they can also make a difference in other United Nations missions. We urge the Council to consider the deployment of child protection advisers in the context of upcoming mandates — for example, those for the missions in Sudan and Burundi. The Council must also focus on child protection in the framework of its own missions — particularly by meeting with children themselves — and must be able to follow up swiftly and effectively on reported cases of egregious violations of children's rights.

We eagerly await the outcome of the work of the Office of International Oversight Services assessing the United Nations system's response to children and armed conflict, in conformity with the Secretary-General's United Nations reform efforts. We hope that the assessment will provide important guidance on ways to address child protection in situations of armed conflict in a sustainable and coordinated way.

Canada recognizes the contribution of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Special Representative is a powerful voice for children victimized by armed conflict. We encourage the Special Representative to interact with special rapporteurs, United Nations actors, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and children and youth in his work.

We also wish to highlight the activities of those who work on the front lines: the representatives of United Nations agencies and of the partner non-governmental organizations who — often at personal risk — strive to meet the needs of children in armed conflicts. Those efforts are essential to combat violations of children's rights and to ensure adherence to relevant international law.

If the Council truly wants to protect children and to suppress egregious violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, it must systematically meet its commitments. The era of application proposed by the Secretary-General is well upon us, and we, the international community, are long overdue in translating our commitments to the child protection programme of action and its mechanisms into concrete operations on the ground.

In conclusion, child protection is a shared commitment, and we urge Council members — together with Member States, United Nations agencies and regional and civil society organizations — to make good on our commitment to better protect the rights and well-being of children and to build sustainable peace for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Monaco.

Mr. Borghini (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): The principality of Monaco is always very mindful of anything that affects children. We have taken note of the important report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053), and we thank him for it. We also thank his Special Representative and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their briefings this morning and their work.

We noted with satisfaction some progress in the report, particularly in defining norms, drafting reports, establishing aid and monitoring mechanisms, raising awareness among the public and authorities, continuing negotiations and drawing up peace agreements, working to promote child protection and reintegration, and in the development of the situation of some countries — unfortunately rare — all of that often with the valuable participation of non-governmental organizations.

However, as the Council is aware, children continue to be killed, wounded, mutilated, tortured, raped, prostituted, abducted, displaced, terrorized, forcibly recruited, forced to become killers themselves, and so on. As the report stresses, all of this takes place in a general climate of impunity. The two lists that appear in the annexes to the report (S/2003/1053) and that include more than 50 groups and factions or even, it seems, the armed forces of Member States of our Organization, are very disturbing. Of course, we are aware of all the difficulties encountered in trying to put an end to the conflicts that lead to all of these crimes and in trying to put an end the crimes themselves, and we understand that action on these issues needs to be varied, ongoing, persistent and coordinated. To that end, we support, of course, the fundamental principles that should be implemented in the area of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and

reintegration of children, both boys and girls, whether disabled or not. We likewise support the recommendations for establishing dialogue with the parties to the conflicts and the commitments resulting from this, to the extent possible.

Finally, we support the final recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular, the recommendations dealing with concrete action decided on by the Security Council, with appeals for compliance with norms, with condemnation of violations committed and implementation of targeted measures, and with the role of the International Criminal Court in pursuing the perpetrators.

Before I conclude, I wish to reiterate the thanks already addressed this morning to the French delegation for its active role on this issue. And, truly concluding at this point, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate Chile on the way you have organized and facilitated this meeting of the Council. Since this is the first time that I address the Council, I would like to greet all members, whether permanent or non-permanent, former or new, and I wish them courage, determination and success in discharging their responsibilities.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Monaco for his kind words and I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Berruga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to publicly pay tribute to the initiative taken by Chile in organizing this open debate on a topic as sensitive and important as this — children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank, on behalf of my country, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, for his report on children and armed conflict, prepared in compliance with Council resolution 1460 (2003), in the negotiations for which my delegation actively participated.

At the time, Mexico insisted on the importance of taking advantage of the experience acquired during peace negotiations and on the inclusion of child protection advisors in peacekeeping operations and in the programmes being implemented on demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation. That is why we take note, with particular interest, of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1053). For my country, the protection and rehabilitation of children must be part of all peace negotiations and of the ensuing agreements. The demobilization of child soldiers should also be sought at every point during the conflict, as well as the adoption of special measures to prevent the resurgence of recruitment and any possible reprisals.

Attention must also be focused on special needs, such as the concrete and specific needs of girls, in particular young fighters, as well as of disabled children. The support and commitment of the international community, in particular of donor countries, is indispensable in this regard for the success of our efforts for reintegration.

The complexity of the issue of children and armed conflicts is a challenge for the United Nations. It calls for a coordinated and effective response from several organs and entities in the system, bearing in mind their respective areas of competence. We must also create mechanisms for receiving contributions from civil society, which in many cases is a source of privileged and direct information on the situation of children in armed conflicts.

My delegation is prepared to actively participate in the analysis of the evaluation prepared by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the effectiveness of the United Nations system's response to the problem of children and armed conflict.

There has undoubtedly been progress in the attention given by the Security Council to the question of children in armed conflict. There are, however, conflicts under consideration by the Council in which the necessary attention to this issue has been lacking. In compliance with resolution 1460 (2003), the Secretary-General could include, in his reports to the Council on conflict situations, a separate section on the use of minors, which might perhaps point to those responsible. Such an analysis should include the repercussions of the illicit exploitation of natural resources, trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the use of anti-personnel landmines.

In Mexico's opinion, the Council has an important part to play. As determined by resolution 1460 (2003), it can contact the parties to the conflict when missions are being carried out in the field and can support the Secretary-General in the dialogues he may undertake. It can also adopt measures to promote compliance with international law and international humanitarian law, in particular relating to children in armed conflicts, and put an end to impunity for those who continue to recruit children in violation of these

provisions. At the same time, we must recognize the progress achieved by parties that have committed to put an end to the recruitment and the use of children in conflicts and to take all required measures to alleviate the suffering of children.

Without a doubt, under the leadership of the Chilean delegation, we are sure these types of issues will be undertaken.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Let me begin by informing the Council that Azerbaijan commemorates today the anniversary of the so-called "Black January" tragedy that took place exactly 14 years ago in my country. We are paying tribute to the innocent victims of the Soviet invasion. On 20 January 1990, Soviet troops, 35,000 strong, stormed the capital of Azerbaijan, the city of Baku, in a desperate, extremely brutal and yet futile attempt to strangle the ever-growing independence movement and to stop the demise of the Communist regime in Azerbaijan.

One hundred and thirty-three persons were killed, 744 wounded: these are the tragic and telling figures of the massacre committed by the brutal and totalitarian Soviet regime. What is of special relevance to today's meeting is that a large number of those killed and wounded that night were children. This scar is still fresh in our memory and we mourn today, with millions of Azerbaijanis around the world, those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom and independence of Azerbaijan.

Regarding the topic of today's discussion, allow me to join previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to the Chilean presidency of the Security Council for convening this debate on this agenda item, which is of particular interest to the broader membership. I would also like to thank Mr. Olaru Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for the outstanding commitment and admirable professionalism with which they have been discharging their difficult but very important duties, and I thank them for their very informative and interesting briefings.

We also commend the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (S/2003/1053), which we view as a considerable improvement over last year's report and which contains a series of concrete, clear-cut and action-oriented recommendations.

Azerbaijan shares the view that the comprehensive frameworks established for addressing this issue in the United Nations need to be regularly reviewed and updated. Overall, over the course of the past few years, significant progress on this path has been achieved, and we welcome the important advances presented in the report.

But there should be no room for complacency. We have to admit that consistent application of this wide-ranging set of tools and standards on the ground remains the ultimate challenge for the international community, and in particular for the Security Council as the organ bearing primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is clear to all that the gap between theory and practice must be dealt with first.

Indeed, children continue to be the main victims of conflicts and their suffering takes many forms, including murder, imprisonment, recruitment as soldiers and hostage-taking. Deep emotional scars and traumas inflicted on children as a result of hostilities are no less painful, especially among children who have been forced into being refugees and internally displaced children, whose number in Azerbaijan is in the thousands. The consideration of situations of armed conflict and their consequences for children is of acute relevance and primary concern to Azerbaijan, due to the realities of the ongoing conflict in which we are involved with neighbouring Armenia.

In this regard, we fully support the proposals contained in section III D of the report on systematic monitoring, reporting and action, especially the recommendation that the Security Council "should encompass all situations of conflict" (*S/2003/1053, para. 83*). In that regard, we appeal to the Council and to the Secretary-General to take due note of the continued grave situation of the conflict-affected children of Azerbaijan. In this context, the Secretary-General's report to the Council should serve as an important channel for conveying information gathered through the monitoring framework. Such information should serve as a trigger for action, which might range from calls for compliance to condemnation of

violations and the application of targeted measures. In order to put an end to the ever-growing culture of impunity, it is critical that violations lead to concrete measures being taken by the Council.

Although no active combat action is taking place on the ground for the time being, one of the many consequences of the aggression of Armenia against my country is the fact that more than 50 Azerbaijani children are still being held in Armenian captivity and that many others have died after being subjected to ill-treatment. These are figures of the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose representatives have been denied access to all the places where Azerbaijani children are imprisoned. According to our information, their number exceeds 100. Some of those imprisoned Azerbaijani children have been forcefully recruited by the Armenian side into the Armenian army for participation in military activities against Azerbaijan, which is not only inhuman, but also in gross violation of many international instruments, in particular the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which Armenia is a signatory.

This horrible fact was made known in the press document issued on 15 January 2004 — a couple of days ago — by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which last Thursday reviewed the second periodic report of Armenia. The Minister of Social Security of Armenia, admitting this fact in response to a question, noted that

> "there might have been cases where children below the age of 18 were called up before 1994 when the conflict with Azerbaijan was sparked over the Nagorno-Karabagh issue".

While we expect the official records of that meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to be made public, this fact deserves proper assessment not only by the Committee, but also by the Security Council and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Having said that, I would appreciate it if the future reports of the Secretary-General on the matter would reflect the situation of Azerbaijani children who have suffered as a result of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, I would support the words of Mr. Olara Otunnu, who earlier today said that only the end of conflict is a sure way to start alleviating the suffering of children in armed conflict. I could not agree more with that statement and we again turn to the Security Council, which 10 years ago adopted four resolutions on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with an appeal to make every effort to ensure their implementation, which will open the way to a resolution of that frozen conflict and immediately disentangle many other knots, including that related to the situation of children in armed conflict. Let me repeat again here the concept that the notion of forgotten conflicts is an insult to those who are exposed to international neglect.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I should like to begin by extending the appreciation of my delegation to you, Sir, for convening this meeting today on the agenda item before us, which reflects the renewed determination of the Council to protect children from the ravages of armed conflicts. My delegation also commends the Secretary-General for his timely report, which details the advances made towards the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

My delegation has noted with deep concern the current deplorable situation of children in armed conflict. According to statistics provided by the United Nations Children's Fund, approximately 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict and human rights violations and more than 2 million have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade. At least 6 million children have become permanently disabled or seriously injured and more than 1 million have been orphaned or separated from their families.

The rights of children in armed conflicts should be acknowledged and respected. We believe that those rights should be made an explicit priority and firmly entrenched in peacemaking, peace-building and conflict resolution processes, as well as in demobilization and reintegration plans. In view of that, we value the integration of child protection into the mandates and reports of peacekeeping missions and the training of personnel, as well as the appointment of child protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

My delegation is concerned about the continuing use and recruitment of children as child soldiers.

Statistics indicate that, currently, about 300,000 child soldiers, including boys and girls under the age of 18, are involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide. Once children are carrying guns and involved in armed hostilities, their prospects for enjoying life with the rights set out in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child will be severely undermined.

Indonesia continues to support concerted international efforts to alleviate the sufferings of children dragged into conflicts. Indonesia is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which upholds the political, socio-economic and civil rights of children and strongly supports the Optional Protocol, which strengthens that Convention by calling for a minimum age of 18 for participation in hostilities.

We also pay particular attention to the importance of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes in addressing the issue of child soldiers, especially in the post-conflict period. The overarching considerations concerning the future DDR for children proposed by the Secretary-General could become a good basis for further reflection on the issue.

My delegation deplores the incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children, especially girls, in humanitarian crises and conflict situations. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of special protection for children at refugee camps and the observance of the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and those to improve greater awareness of personnel's responsibilities as United Nations peacekeepers, especially in the protection of vulnerable populations.

Armed conflicts have generally been kept alive by a continuous supply of weapons. Children become victims and victimizers when they are involved in armed conflict. Statistics show that between 8,000 and 10,000 children are killed or maimed by landmines every year. It is very pertinent in that regard that we strengthen our commitment to address the impact that landmines, unexploded ordnance and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have on children.

Complex emergencies have an impact on adults and children that affects them in various ways. Such situations create additional burdens for children when they are displaced from their homes and communities and become separated from their families. Humanitarian assistance — including family reintegration programmes — is important if we are to address such situations.

In sum, the future of humanity depends on children. The use of children in armed conflict casts a dark shadow over their future, for children who are exposed to violence often carry fears and hatred in their hearts and minds that have profound and long-term effects. Hence, much needs to be done to alleviate their suffering and to ensure that, through adequate support programmes, they can take their rightful place in their societies. We are duty bound to extend our cooperation to the Secretary-General in his efforts to address the issue of children affected by armed conflict.

I would be remiss in my duty if I concluded my statement without commending the role played by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, who has made significant contributions to uplift the lives of less fortunate children — for many of whom life will now be worth living — as well as the role of the United Nations Children's Fund in addressing the issue. As far as fulfilling the mandate of the Special Representative is concerned, my delegation stresses the importance of close consultation and cooperation between the special adviser and Member States.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We appreciate this opportunity to contribute in the review of the implementation of resolution 1460 (2003), as well as the Council's earlier resolutions, 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001). These texts, indeed, provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as was stated in resolution 1460 (2003) — a framework that must be rendered meaningful by means of periodic review and follow-up. The Council debates of past years have been instrumental in creating norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Similarly, new review processes such as this debate should focus on moving forward with the implementation of these norms and standards — the one area where we clearly continue to fall short of the goals that we have set ourselves.

Despite positive developments, the Secretary-General states in paragraph 49 of his report, "all parties mentioned in my previous report continued to recruit or use children" during the period under review and, in

paragraph 22, that, indeed, "the general situation for children remains grave".

The Council supported the Secretary-General's call for an era of application in its most recent resolution on the subject, resolution 1460 (2003). A series of concrete steps should now be taken so that we can effectively enter this era. A first step would seem to be to send the clear message that impunity for those involved in child-related war crimes and abuse has to come to an end. States are responsible for holding accountable the perpetrators of violations of the rights of children as contained, inter alia, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols.

A number of violations, including the conscription and enlistment of children under the age of 15, have been classified as war crimes by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). If — and only if — States fail to prosecute crimes such as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access to them, everything necessary must be done to make sure that persons responsible for such crimes will be brought before the ICC, in accordance with the principle of complementarity.

We thus fully subscribe to the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report concerning the need for proactive advocacy and public information on the role of the ICC.

As in other areas, application and implementation prove to be an almost intractable challenge which requires the sustained resolve and involvement of the relevant players within the United Nations system. Children affected by armed conflict deserve and require such sustained resolve and involvement. As has become clear both from the report and the debate so far, effective monitoring and, where necessary, follow-up action, will be crucial to advance the era of application. Clear and improved coordination among the players in New York and in the field will be necessary if an effective system of monitoring and reporting is to be established. Given its primary role in the area of international peace and security, a special responsibility falls on the Security Council for setting such up an effective system of monitoring and follow-up action. There must be institutional clarity. That means that there must be no doubt who does what and who is responsible for coordination.

The Council needs to address the issue of children affected by armed conflict more comprehensively in its daily work, in particular through situation-specific resolutions. In the period covered by the present report, of a total of 54 country-specific resolutions, only nine resolutions, covering five conflict areas, dealt with children and armed conflict. Both the Council and the Secretary-General — whose reports form the basis of action by the Council — could ensure full coverage of the issue by, for instance, designating focal points in charge of the issue.

At the same time, of course, monitoring must not be limited to country situations on the agenda of the Council, but, rather, must apply to children worldwide. We believe that the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict can play a continued central advocacy role in this respect. I would like at this juncture to thank the Special Representative for all the work he has done again over the past year.

The monitoring of compliance with Council resolutions and the application of the relevant standards can be effective only if it is supplemented by specific measures in cases where non-compliance persists. Again, the Council has an obvious central role to play in this respect, and we welcome the recommendations made by the Secretary-General regarding targeted measures against those responsible for recruiting children or other crimes against children.

The existing legal framework for the protection of children affected by armed conflict has rightly been praised. But we must now recognize that all norms and standards are only as good and useful as their application. In our view, the current report clearly reveals that implementation has been insufficient and that much needs to be done in order to reach the level that, in theory, we should already have attained.

Establishing clear structures within the United Nations system is a first step and a prerequisite for such progress, and we hope that the still-outstanding assessment of the system-wide response to the challenges in the area of children and armed conflict will lead to clarity on the role of United Nations players.

Given that significant advances in practice are urgently needed, we very much hope that the Council will adopt a strong and clear resolution that can form the basis for the effective improvement of the situation of children affected by armed conflict worldwide — one that, in particular, enables the United Nations system to take effective action in this respect.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): Let me first join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing and presiding over this open debate. We also express appreciation for the presence earlier today of the Foreign Minister of Chile.

The plight of children affected by armed conflict merits the utmost attention on the part of the international community, and their protection must be the primary responsibility of all of us.

The delegation of Armenia takes note of some positive trends in the field of the protection of children in armed conflict in recent years. As outlined in the Secretary-General's report, the issue has gained significant public and political recognition. A set of legal instruments has been adopted, providing a comprehensive framework for addressing the issue. We welcome the recent entry into force of two major instruments: the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I would like to inform the Council that Armenia is a signatory to both instruments and that their ratification is under way.

It is unfortunate that, despite the legal safeguards in place, horrendous violations of children's rights, such as child soldiering and the killing, maiming and rape of children, still continue in many parts of the world. Obviously, it would have been naïve to expect that problems of such gravity could have been resolved by the mere provision of the relevant legal norms. My delegation therefore fully supports the Secretary-General's call for "an era of application" of the internationally agreed norms and standards for the protection of children in armed conflict.

We believe that, since it is the primary responsibility of Governments to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict and to alleviate their suffering, States' reporting mechanisms to relevant treaty bodies and to the Committee on the Rights of the Child must be strengthened in order to ensure that the necessary focus is maintained on the issue of children affected by armed conflict.

Special measures must also be elaborated and implemented by the international community, and by the Council in particular, in order to ensure compliance by non-State actors. In this regard, systematic monitoring and reporting with respect to the situation in the field take on particular importance. We view the integration of child- protection mandates and the deployment of special advisers in peacekeeping missions as a positive step forward. However, the issue of impunity remains critical, and decisive action is needed in order to put an end to the vicious crimes that are being perpetrated against children.

The issue of refugee children and their rehabilitation and reintegration into society are other important aspects of the problem. Related issues range from demobilization to the provision of humanitarian assistance and the ensuring of children's physical and psychological recovery. We believe also that the needs of girls must be given special consideration in the overall policy of addressing the problems of children affected by armed conflict.

As a country hosting about 65,000 refugee children from Azerbaijan, the Government of Armenia deems these issues of particular concern. Despite the current socio-economic difficulties facing the country, the post-conflict rehabilitation of children, particularly with respect to health care and education, are the focus of the Government's attention. The situation of these children is also reflected in Armenia's second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was considered by the Committee on 15 January last.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my Government's appreciation to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to donor countries for their assistance and support with respect to child-related issues.

The protection of children affected by armed conflict is a complex issue which requires a comprehensive approach. Armenia therefore believes that concerted action is necessary at the national, regional and international levels. We believe also that our efforts should complement each other, with all stakeholders utilizing the comparative advantages of their respective mandates and experience. The Government of Armenia is committed to doing its

utmost and constructively to contribute to global efforts to promote this noble cause.

Finally, having followed the discussions, which evolved in a very constructive manner — something that is particularly gratifying given the participation of countries that are not often in agreement with each other — I cannot but express my regret at the continued repetition by the delegation of Azerbaijan of its unchanged rhetoric.

The reference to the so-called military aggression of Armenia is totally misleading. The resulting situation is the forced reaction of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan's decision to use military force to suppress the legitimate, just and peaceful quest of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to exercise the right to self-determination, which is guaranteed by international law and the United Nations Charter.

The references to the four Security Council resolutions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are a clear attempt on the part of Azerbaijan to read those resolutions and apply them selectively in a partial and self-serving manner. Indeed, Azerbaijan itself is in violation of those resolutions, which urge the parties concerned to pursue negotiations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk group, as well as through direct contacts between them.

Azerbaijan's refusal to engage in direct negotiations with the elected representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the main impediments to the resolution of the conflict. Meanwhile, what Azeri representatives continue to fail to acknowledge is that Armenia has done exactly what the relevant Security Council resolutions have called on it to do — to use its good offices with the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh to help find a peaceful solution of the conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Armenia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Kenya, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Bahemuka (Kenya): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, I would like to express our gratitude to you for having found the time to preside over this very important meeting. As we gather here today for the annual debate on children and armed conflict, we need to reflect seriously on the direction we should take in the quest to protect our children — innocent victims of the wars that continue to ravage the world.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for having established the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, in order to address critical issues pertaining to children affected by armed conflict.

We commend the good work which has been carried out over the years by the Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and his Office. We also thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for UNICEF's continued efforts to address the plight of children around the world.

We welcome the advances that have been made since 1998, when this issue was formally taken up by the Security Council. We are happy to note from the Secretary-General's report that children's issues have been incorporated into a number of peace accords. We welcome also the efforts and progress made so far by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in creating awareness of the plight of children in armed conflict.

We note with gratitude the role played by regional and subregional organizations and a number of civil society initiatives on this issue, and we call upon those organizations that have not yet done so to consider mainstreaming the protection of war-affected children into their policies.

As we address this issue, which is very dear to us, we should not lose sight of the continuing violations of children's rights. Despite the existence of a strong and comprehensive body of legal standards which are aimed at the protection of children generally, and more specifically at children in armed conflict, Kenya regrets that many parties to conflicts continue to ignore these standards, often with impunity. This calls for a strengthened and enhanced international enforcement regime.

We recognize that much more needs to be done to improve the situation of war-affected children. At a glance, a number of the ongoing armed conflicts around the world show a very disturbing picture of the suffering of the children who are caught up in those conflicts. The image of those suffering children strengthens Kenya's resolve to save them.

My Government therefore supports the measures proposed by the Secretary-General to alleviate the suffering of war-affected children. We recognize that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are key to the resolution of this issue. We also support the deployment of child-protection advisers in peacekeeping missions and the training of peacekeeping personnel in child protection and child rights.

We especially wish to thank UNICEF, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations such as Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, which has taken a lead role in negotiating with parties to conflicts to ensure the protection of children.

Kenya continues to play an important role as mediator in regional conflicts, especially in East Africa and the Horn of Africa region. Many children affected by those conflicts are indeed suffering. In that regard, I wish to urge the incorporation of children's concerns in national and regional peace initiatives, agreements and efforts. As a regular troop-contributing country, Kenya supports pre-deployment training initiatives for peacekeepers in regional and United Nations peace operations.

My delegation is of the view that strengthening subregional initiatives to end practices which are harmful to children — including the illicit exploitation of natural resources, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, cross-border recruitment and the use of children in armed conflict — should be of paramount importance to all concerned.

In view of the urgent need to strengthen child protection measures in situations of armed conflict, Kenya welcomes the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report, and we hope that they will provide a useful basis for the way forward. We therefore look forward to working closely with the Security Council as it seeks to endorse the proposals for the establishment and implementation of an effective monitoring and reporting system, as contained in the fourth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Considering the alarming reports of grave violations against the well-being of children and in view of the fact that more children suffer from the denial of humanitarian access, Kenya hopes that the Council will support the proposal to expand the list of violations under consideration beyond child-soldiering to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

We will continue to support every effort by the Security Council and the United Nations to put an end to the climate of impunity in which crimes are committed against children in the context of armed conflict. In that regard, all parties responsible for crimes against children should be brought to justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have now come to the end of the list of speakers. I give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to respond to the observations and comments made by delegations.

Mr. Otunnu: I have listened very attentively to all the comments, critiques and suggestions. We shall follow up on all these in the coming months, and we shall stay in touch with both the Council and delegations that are not on the Council.

Let me very briefly touch on a couple of things. First, as the Council begins to discuss a resolution on this issue, our clear preference and hope is that this would be the occasion for the Council to act, and to act in terms of the targeted measures that are outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1053) — targeted measures which would attach to the leadership of fighting entities and measures which would attach to organizations involved in fighting.

If it should prove impossible on this occasion for the Council to act, then it would be exceedingly important that a clear signal go forth from the Council that this is not a pro forma postponement but that it is part of very graduated measures the Council proposes to take.

In that context, I think it would be very important that the Council ask parties to conflicts to prepare in collaboration with United Nations country teams — the United Nations country presence on the ground — specific action plans indicating how and within what time frame they propose to end the recruitment and use of children as child soldiers, to give a time frame that would suggest a sense of urgency on this issue and to come back to the Council within a reasonable period of time with updated information. Otherwise, I fear that the credibility of this agenda — the credibility of our collective efforts to protect war-affected children — as

well as the credibility of the Council, might suffer as a consequence.

My second point concerns my satisfaction in hearing so many delegations underscore the fact that there are other grave violations of the rights of children beyond child-soldiering; that all these child victims of armed conflict deserve the attention, support and protection of the Council; and that in any monitoring exercise we should keep most of these grave violations in view in terms of action and compliance. I express great satisfaction in hearing that.

The third point I would like to make concerns monitoring and reporting. Again, I take note of the fact that there is unanimous support for establishing a monitoring and reporting system. The Secretary-General's report outlines most of the elements: the instruments and standards, what kinds of violations might be monitored and what actors within the United Nations system might participate in such a monitoring exercise — and there are other actors outside: non-governmental and regional organizations. What we now require is to deepen and intensify consultations, discussions, about how the contributions of these various stakeholders — the gathering and flow of information, the added value of various contributions — how all these elements can be coordinated, integrated and become an effective system.

Fourthly, it is crucial that the Council should underscore the important role of the United Nations presence on the ground in relation to monitoring and reporting and the era of application. United Nations peace missions, as well as United Nations country teams and, of course, the non-governmental organizations — we rely on them to gather information on the basis of which we then compile reports to the Council for action.

And in that connection, I would like to say that beyond the Security Council, there are other centres of action — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Criminal Court, the Commission on Human Rights. They, too, should become engaged in the campaign for the era of application within their own areas of competence.

I should just like to refer briefly to two comments by two delegations. First, I should like to thank very much the delegation of India for a very systematic, carefully constructed and serious critique of this agenda and the response of the United Nations system to the use of children in armed conflict. I may not agree with all the views expressed, but I appreciate the seriousness with which that critique has been put forward. This is not the moment to engage in dialogue, but I promise, following this, to engage in bilateral dialogue with the delegation to discuss some of those issues.

The second delegation that I would like to refer to by name is the delegation of Uganda. I listened with much interest and with deep sadness to the polemic by the representative of Uganda, directed at a particular individual. I know the Council has enough wars on its hands, so I want to assure members that I am not to embark on a response to that statement. I think the last thing the Council wants is to add another civil war, between the Ugandan delegation and Olara Otunnu, to its list of conflicts to handle. I do not believe it appropriate to do that here. Rather, I invite the delegation of Uganda to join all of us — rather than fighting each other — in ensuring that we can salvage the children of northern Uganda, who are condemned to abominable conditions of human rights abuses and neglect.

With regard to the lists, I should like to say that one can question what kinds of lists we might have, but I think it is very difficult to question the criteria, the vetting system and the method we use in producing the lists. The Office of the Special Representative, in fact, has no presence on the ground, so we rely entirely on United Nations agencies on the ground and non-governmental organizations to provide us with information, on the basis of which we then convene a group here in New York, which has within it all United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, to vet in the most thorough way possible all the information in order to agree on a list to submit it to the Secretary-General, who in turn submits to the Security Council. And that is the same criterion we use for all situations. So I just wanted to clarify that; I do not want to embark on a response to the polemic.

Finally, I should like very much to thank you, Mr. President, and the Foreign Minister for taking the time to be with us personally today to underscore the importance that she and Chile attach to this issue. I also thank the delegation of France, which has taken the leadership in the past several years in shaping and guiding this issue within the Security Council. We

appreciate that leadership enormously. Again, I thank the Council warmly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Otunno for his comments. He may rest assured that we shall take very much into account his observations concerning the Security Council's role on this important subject.

I now give the floor, under rule 39, to Mr. Daniel Toole, Director of the Division of Emergency Programmes of the United Nations Children's Fund, to respond to comments made.

Mr. Toole: On behalf of Ms. Carol Bellamy, let me join others in thanking you, Mr. President, your Foreign Minister and your delegation for the expert way in which you have handled these deliberations. In addition, I thank the delegation of France for its preparation of the draft resolution.

We welcome today's action-oriented discussion and support very warmly the era of application about which members have spoken. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, he is the person here; we are the people on the ground. As Ms. Bellamy noted in her briefing, we are on the ground before, during and after conflicts, and it is partly our job to make sure that some of the comments and observations that have been made today are followed up on the ground.

We were very pleased by the strong support for a strengthened system of monitoring and reporting, as requested even this morning in Ms. Bellamy's briefing. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) currently documents and reports on the situation of women and children in all countries where we work, so to add the issue of children and armed conflict has been a major priority for us for the past 10 years We appreciate the interest of the Security Council in this area, and we shall continue to do more in that regard. Together with our partners, we shall develop monitoring mechanisms at the country and field levels, and we are also examining effective structures in order to feed into appropriate forums such as the Security Council, but also regional forums in which members take part elsewhere.

I would also underline — as did the Special Representative of the Secretary-General — that it is important to note the various kinds of monitoring and reporting that take place. Our aim is to feed into existing human rights and other mechanisms to ensure that children's rights and particular information on those rights are reflected. That is the mandate of UNICEF, and that is what we shall continue to do.

UNICEF is also very pleased to hear of the strong support for child protection advisers. We strongly support their work in the four peacekeeping missions where they are deployed. They serve an important function in relation to, first, capacity-building within the missions themselves, and secondly, monitoring reporting within the mandates of peacekeeping missions. In addition, they allow the situation of children to be addressed within the complete peacekeeping operation itself and report back to Council meetings. As Ms. Bellamy mentioned, we would support deploying child protection advisers in all peacekeeping missions.

Moreover, we were very pleased with the strong support for efforts to support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). We are encouraged by the Council's interest in more sustained DDR programmes. It is important that the DDR process be automatically included in peacekeeping mandates. As I mentioned, we are an operational agency. We work with non-governmental organizations and other agencies of the United Nations system on the ground, and we shall strengthen our efforts to protect children, to prevent their recruitment and to support their reintegration once they have been demobilized.

There is also a need to ensure that the lessons learned and the principles that come out of the DDR process are endorsed once and for all. In that sense, we believe that the demobilization of soldiers – as we said this morning – should not wait for peace, for formal DDR or for the required resources to be made available. We would also underline that we recognize that girls are particularly vulnerable and that they are also recruited as child soldiers. They need specific attention and assistance to be reintegrated. UNICEF is also engaged in extensive dialogue with our partners, and with partners to conflict, to ensure the release of children from combat as quickly as possible.

We are pleased that a very large number of representatives supported the list of countries — including an updated list and an expanded list — on an annual basis, including parties to conflicts who recruit child soldiers. It is an important tool for advocacy and

an important tool at the field level that we can use when we return to the country level.

Finally, we are very pleased with the strong support for action to prevent conflict. It is only when we prevent conflict that we can truly protect children against the recruitment, exploitation and abuse linked to armed conflict. UNICEF is working at the country level and with partners at the global level to promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

As stated by many delegations, our future is our children. UNICEF will continue to intensify its work with all members here and to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Toole for his comments.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council will remain seized of this important matter.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.